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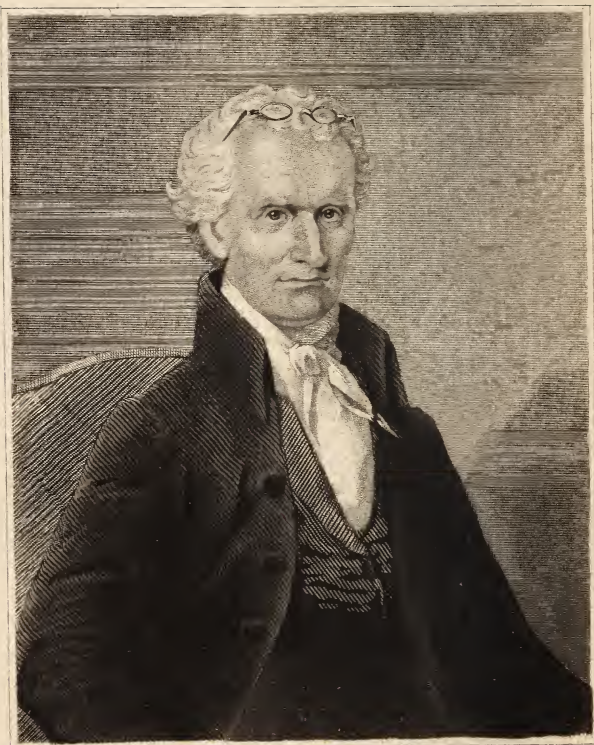
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Yours affectionately
John Collins

A SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE OF REV. JOHN COLLINS,

LATE OF

THE OHIO CONFERENCE.

Cincinnati: ②

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TO THE READER.

THIS Sketch has been delayed some time, under the hope of obtaining materials for a more extended account, than I am now able to give, of the life of Mr. Collins, who was one of the most devoted and useful ministers of the Methodist Church. But failing to procure the necessary facts, this outline is published, which might as well have been written a few days after his decease.

THE WRITER.

A S K E T C H
OF THE
LIFE OF REV. JOHN COLLINS.

THE Rev. JOHN COLLINS was born in Gloucester county, in the state of New Jersey, on the first of November, 1769. He has left no sketch of his eventful life, except a very short and imperfect memorandum on two half sheets of letter paper. But in the many fields where he labored, there remain records of love, written on the hearts of his acquaintances and friends, which can never be effaced or lessened, until the pulsations of those hearts shall cease.

In the above sketch he says, that he has always reflected with pleasure on the first moneyed transaction of his

life, which was the purchase of a New Testament, when a small boy, with the first dollar he ever owned. He read, and committed to memory, large portions of that blessed book. His earliest religious impressions were received while strolling with a boy, about his own age, on the Sabbath, to diversify their amusements. They heard singing, and drawing near to the house, they found that a collection of people were singing the hymn, beginning,

“Thee we adore, eternal name,
And humbly own to thee.”

Every sentiment of the hymn touched his heart. Never till then did he see life so short and uncertain. The ensuing night, for the first time, he bowed his knees in prayer to God, in his father's barn. He continued to pray regularly, at fixed periods, for some time; but, through the influence of wicked com-

panions, his mind was drawn from religion. For several years he wandered about seeking rest and finding none. On his return home from these wanderings, he found that one of his friends had been converted, and was preaching the Gospel. This, as might be expected, deeply affected him, and again he became a seeker of religion. But he soon found, that such were the numbers and character of his associates, that he could not hope to persevere in a religious course whilst within the reach of their influence. His feelings were social and ardent, and he was unable to resist the importunities and examples of his friends.

With the view of changing his course and habits, he resolved to travel to Charleston, in South Carolina. He hoped there to form new associates, whose influence would be more salutary.

At that early day, the usual and cheapest mode of traveling to the south, was by sea. He accordingly embarked on board of a vessel, and, on his passage, encountered a terrific storm. The captain and crew, though vain and trifling before, and seemed to rely on the strength of the vessel, and their art in navigation, became suppliants at a throne of mercy. The danger was imminent, and there seemed to be no ground of hope, except in Him who rides upon the storm, and calms the mighty surges of the deep. On this occasion, he was strongly impressed with the omnipresence of God, which, in after years, became the solace of his life.

This solace is felt only by the Christian. It belongs to no other system of religion, or of ethics. Those whose deeds will not bear the light are fond of darkness. They seem to persuade

themselves, that, by possibility, they may escape the notice of an omniscient God. Hurried onward by unbridled passion, they endeavor to suppress reason and conscience. The reflection, if indulged, that "thou God seest me," would, generally, prevent the commission of crime, by those who believe the Bible. But the Christian is cheered by the omnipresence of his God. Under circumstances the most unfavorable to human appearance, this consolation sustains him. Like the prophet of old, who was surrounded by the Assyrian host, he knows that the chariots and horsemen of heaven encamp about him, and are stronger than his adversaries.

Mr. Collins remained at Charleston more than a year. During this period, he was in the habit of praying often. On one occasion, while on his knees, the enemy suggested to him, if the Bible be

true, he could not hope to be converted at Charleston—that, being ashamed of Jesus, he had left his home to seek him in that city, and the words, “Whosoever is ashamed of me before men, of him will I be ashamed before my Father and his holy angels,” overwhelmed him. Such was the effect of this device of the enemy, that, for two years, he did not offer up a prayer.

Whether this temptation proceeded from the evil one, as supposed, or was the suggestion of his own nature, it is not uncommon. When the conscience is tender, and the mind uninstructed, under a sense of unworthiness, discouragements arise which are often difficult to be overcome. Hoping against hope, with a weak and tremulous faith, still there is no ground for despair. But no one can learn this, as he should know it, who has not experienced it.

Having returned from Charleston in November, 1793, Mr. Collins was married to Sarah Blackman, whose amiable disposition and pious life filled his home with domestic bliss. She still survives him, a living example of the excellence and truth of religion.

In June, or July, 1794, he was awakened by a severe affliction which brought him, apparently, to the verge of the grave. In this extremity, he sought religion, and found it in the ensuing October. His convictions were deep—his struggle was protracted and earnest, but the victory was great. The evidence of his acceptance was clear, and he soon became an active member of the Methodist Church. Sometime after this, his mind was much exercised about preaching. But, for a considerable time, he resisted this impression of his duty. He expostulated with the Almighty, that he

was not qualified for so important an undertaking, and that he was encumbered with a family. By fervent and constant prayer, he besought the Lord to send those who were better qualified than himself for so great a work, and who were less encumbered. But the impression of duty became stronger, until he yielded to the suggestion to attempt to preach once, and if any one should be awakened, he might receive it as an evidence of his being called to preach the Gospel.

Under this resolution, the passage of Scripture occurred to him, "Many are called but few chosen," but he did not know where to find it. On his way to the place of his appointment, he called at a house, where he heard a young man read the above passage. He immediately asked the young man for the book, and he preached from that text. The

young man heard the sermon, became awakened, and, soon after, converted. That young man was Larner Blackman, the brother of his wife, who afterward became an eminent preacher of the Gospel in the Methodist Church. Many who will trace these lines, will recollect with what force and beauty Mr. Blackman illustrated the truths of the Gospel. He had few equals in the pulpit, whether his eloquence, or the fruits of his labor, be regarded. And many will recollect the sympathy excited, and the gloom thrown over Cincinnati, and the Methodist Church, when this eminent servant of God, a few days after the adjournment of conference at Cincinnati, in 1815, was drowned, with one or two others, in attempting to cross the Ohio. The horses, in the open ferry boat, became frightened, running together, pushed several of the passengers into the

river, and, among others, Mr. Blackman. He seemed not to be alarmed, and swam sometime, but, eventually, sank to rise no more. His wife remained in the boat, though frantic and overwhelmed, as may well be supposed. She is believed to be now living in the neighborhood of Nashville, Tenn. The body of Mr. Blackman was recovered and interred by a great concourse of weeping, though submissive friends.

The work did not end in the conversion of young Blackman. Ten or eleven of the family were afterward awakened and converted. These evidences were received, as they well might be, by Mr. Collins as a clear indication of his duty, and he could no longer hesitate to perform it. He preached with great acceptance, and the fruits of his ministry were abundant.

In the year 1802, Mr. Collins visited

the Northwestern Territory, now the state of Ohio; and in the following year, removed his family to the west, and settled on a farm in Clermont county, on the east fork of the Little Miami river, about twenty-five miles east of Cincinnati. He continued to occupy this farm until a few years before his decease, when he removed to Maysville, Ky., and resided with his second son, Gen. Collins, who had lost his wife, and had the care of several small children.

Mr. Collins preached, in 1804, the first Methodist sermon that was ever preached in Cincinnati, to twelve persons, in an upper room. Who can read this and not think of that upper room in which the disciples and the Savior met? An upper room, being retired, seemed to be a favorite place in which to worship in the introduction of Christianity. And this was not limited to

Judea. One person, a most estimable lady,* is still living, and is a member of the Church, who heard that sermon. Her father occupied a small house on Main-street,(at that time there were no large houses in Cincinnati,)and kept an article for sale which Mr. Collins called to purchase. He inquired if there were any Methodists in town, and on being informed that the wife of the gentleman was a member, and that he had been reared in the Church, Mr. Collins clasped him in his arms with joy. And on being invited to preach, he consented. Word was sent to the neighbors, and twelve persons were collected, the same evening, in the small upper room. Mr. Collins took for his text a part of the fifteenth and sixteenth verses of the sixteenth chapter of Mark, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to

*Mrs. Dennison.

every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." In a short time after the commencement of the discourse, the preacher and his congregation were in tears, which continued during the whole course of the sermon. Under this discourse, one individual received his conviction, and his conversion soon followed. He afterward became a local preacher.

On his departure the next morning, Mr. Collins promised to influence the Rev. John Sale to visit them for the purpose of organizing a Church. He came in a short time, and formed a class having eight members, and appointed Mr. Gibson its leader. The above lady is the only survivor of that class. This was the beginning of Methodism in Cincinnati. Mr. Gibson was the only person in the Church, whose circum-

stances enabled him to entertain the preacher.

Will the reader linger a moment on that remarkable congregation of twelve; not remarkable for their positions in society, but as the first assemblage of Methodists, to hear a sermon by a Methodist preacher, in a town which, in a few years, was to become noted for Methodism. In the small apartment, lighted with one or two flickering candles, sat the twelve. The preacher performed his duty most faithfully and affectionately. Many tears were shed. Some wept under a conviction of their sins, others from a joyful hope of the future. The speaker had a word for each hearer, and it took effect. There were no dry eyes, nor unfeeling hearts, in the congregation. How small and how humble was this beginning! and yet who can limit the consequences which followed it! One step

led to another, and thus a chain of events succeeded, and are still in progress at this hour. A pebble is thrown into the ocean, which causes an undulation of the water to an almost unlimited extent. And is it not so in the moral world? An impulse for good is given; it gathers strength in purpose and in numbers, until it bears down and overcomes all opposition.

When states or empires rise in grandeur, we naturally recur to their earliest history with interest. We want to see and comprehend the germ, the embryo of that which has become great. And we are edified and instructed by the wonderful progression of events. All men feel the force of this important fact; and interesting as it is, in relation to the progress of states, it becomes still more so in relation to the progress of Christianity. It retains the same life-

giving principle which was so gloriously manifested in the days of the apostles. However humble and unpromising, to all human appearance, the instruments may be in this great cause, their faithful labors are never in vain. What could have been more unpromising than the attempt of twelve fishermen and a tent-maker, to establish this system at the first, against the prejudices, the talents, the learning, and the wealth of the world? But the seed was sown, and the harvest was glorious. And Christianity is still the same. There is a divinity in it, and because its progress is a standing miracle, it does not strike the world as miraculous. But what can be more miraculous than to change the current of the human heart, depraved and corrupt as it is? This is the greatest of all miracles. Had the miracle of healing all manner of diseases been continued, as

in the days of the apostles, it would have been less striking than the changes which are daily witnessed.

In 1807, Mr. Collins joined the traveling connection, and was appointed to the Miami circuit, having for his associate B. Lakin, a most excellent preacher. This new responsibility was assumed by Mr. Collins with much hesitancy and doubt. He rated his own abilities much lower than any one else. Before he left home on this mission, he made out, for his wife, a list of his appointments on the circuit, stating the day and the hour for the commencement of public worship. She was a woman of ardent piety, and had an unshaken faith; and she solemnly pledged herself to engage in prayer, in his behalf, during the hour of his preaching. This pledge was faithfully redeemed; and Mr. Collins had the most satisfactory assurances, in his own

feelings, and in the success of his labors, that the prayers of his wife were answered.

There are few more touching incidents in the history of religion than this. The husband, feeling the full weight of his duty, and being diffident of his own qualifications, asks the fervent prayers of his wife during his preaching hours. He had great confidence in the efficacy of those prayers. And he knew they were interceding in his behalf while he was preaching to the people. That his labors should be successful, under such circumstances, was to be expected; and they were, in a most extraordinary degree, successful. Could the congregation have seen that sainted woman on her knees, praying fervently for her husband, and for them, the whole hour he was preaching to them, their hearts would have been subdued. The men

of the world can show no parallel to this. Their highest aspirations and noblest acts do not compare with it. It is more elevated, more sublime, more heavenly, than any mere human effort can be.

In the year 1808, Mr. Collins traveled the Scioto circuit, and the two following conference years, the Deer Creek circuit. He was next assigned to the Union circuit, which embraced the towns of Lebanon and Dayton. At the latter place there was no Methodist church; very few, if any, members of the Church resided in the town; and if a Methodist minister had preached in the town, it was rare; no circuit-rider had included it as a preaching-place. In passing by the town, or through it, Mr. Collins resolved to include it in his circuit. On inquiry, he found that the court-house was occupied by a preacher in the morn-

ing, and Mr. Collins gave notice that, if agreeable, he would deliver a short discourse after the morning sermon. The morning sermon was unusually long, which afforded but a short time for the second discourse. Understanding that the preacher regularly occupied the court-house every other Sabbath, Mr. Collins made an appointment to preach in the morning of the vacant Sabbath. But when he returned to fill this appointment, he found the house occupied by the same preacher, who deemed it to be his duty to preach a very long sermon. After he concluded, Mr. Collins delivered a very short discourse, and in the conclusion observed, that he perceived he was considered, in preaching at that place, as an obtruder, and that he would make another appointment in the town, if a preaching-place could be procured. Some person rose in the con-

gregation and stated, that he had an unfinished house, which could be seated at a small expense, and might be used for a preaching-place. The next appointment was made at that house, and a crowded congregation assembled. Mr. Collins proposed to the congregation to build a church, which proposition was well received. Mr. Cooper gave a lot for the site of the church, a liberal subscription in money, and another lot to aid in building the church. It was soon built through the agency of Mr. Collins; and he formed a class in the town. This was the origin of Methodism in the town of Dayton.

On the Union circuit, and especially in the town and vicinity of Lebanon, a revival commenced, which, in a short time, so increased the society in Lebanon, as to make it one of the largest in the state. It attracted the attention of

the preachers and the Church throughout the western country. Before the commencement of this gracious dispensation, the congregations were so small, as to find accommodation in one or two small rooms. But the increase of members and hearers was so great, as, in a very short time after the excitement commenced, to require a different place of worship. A house, the largest that could be found, familiarly called "the red house," was procured. It was a mere shell, and was rented and fitted up with common benches, and a temporary stand, or pulpit.

This structure and its accommodations, would make a sorry figure at the present day. But it was the most interesting place of public worship that the writer of this ever entered. He has often, in his own mind, drawn a painful contrast between that rude and humble

frame building, and the modern churches, which everywhere adorn and beautify our cities and towns. The man of taste may admire these lofty edifices, their beautiful proportions, in accordance with the most approved rules of architecture, and their commodious seats, aisles, altars and pulpits; but these are as nothing to the place where the preacher is full of the inspiration of the Gospel, and his hearers hang upon his lips with fervent prayer and rejoicing. Under such circumstances, it is easy to preach and easy to hear, and all are benefited.

Night after night, and day after day, were these meetings continued, with increasing interest, until few, very few, of the citizens of the village remained unaffected. Scores after scores were added to the Church, and no doubt is entertained, that many who were the subjects of this revival are now among the sanc-

tified in heaven; others are on their way; but some turned aside, who have also gone to their account. During the whole course of this work, there was the greatest cordiality, sympathy, and love, among the members of the Church. Every movement was harmonious, and each one sought to advance the prosperity and happiness of the whole. All revivals are characterized by this spirit; but in the one now spoken of, it prevailed in an uncommon measure.

How rarely, if ever, do difficulties arise in a Church whilst its members are influenced by the spirit of their Master! In the absence of this spirit, members find fault with each other, with their preacher, and with the general administration of the Discipline of the Church. Points of doctrine, too, are discussed, and men, of more ardor than piety, seek to introduce into the mem-

bership views of civil polity not necessarily connected with religion, and which are sure to destroy the harmony of the body. It is, at this point, the doctrine of reform is advocated by impetuous minds, and a spirit of proscription is generated and carried out, which is not, unfrequently, destructive of the purity of religion, and of the prosperity of the Church. The chief matter in controversy, thus introduced into the Church, however foreign it may be to religion, and to the best interest of the Church, becomes the great question in dispute, and absorbs every other consideration. The venerable Collins once remarked, in reference to such a state, "It is some evidence that the society think of religion when they quarrel about it;" and it may be added, as a lamentable fact, that no better evidence than this is sometimes furnished of their piety.

After continuing a second year on the circuit including Lebanon, endeared as Mr. Collins was to the society at Lebanon, and much as he was attached to them, circumstances required him to locate. During his retirement from the traveling connection, he often visited Lebanon, and was always received as a beloved father by the whole society. His labors were blessed on these visits, and the religious intercourse was instructive and sweet, and is still remembered by the living, and we have no doubt by the dead.

In regard to this location, Mr. Collins said to a friend, who has communicated the fact, that, "While he was laboriously cultivating the Lord's vineyard, in the earlier years of his itinerant ministry, his faithful wife superintended herself all the farming operations at home. The produce of his fertile lands

was carefully harvested and gathered in. Providence seemed to smile upon his fields and the labor bestowed on them, as well upon his own labors in tilling Immanuel's land; and his family enjoyed a competency of the necessaries and comforts of life. The increasing cares and labors devolving upon his beloved wife, by the enlargement of the farm, and the wants of his rising family, and the seeming necessity of his personal attention to both, began to be a source of anxious thought to him. He came to the conclusion, that the circumstances justified his retirement from the Lord's vineyard, to cultivate his own.

“With this view, he located, and devoted his entire time to the improvement and cultivation of his farm. He prepared a large quantity of ground, and had the promise of a heavy crop of all kinds of grain. But the same smiling

providence, which had hitherto blessed his labors, seemed now withheld. A rainy season mildewed, or rusted, his fine crops of wheat and other grain. His meadows yielded a large supply of hay; but, after being cut, it was rendered worthless by the long continued rains. Thus, after bestowing so much care and attention upon his farm, he lost almost its entire products. But this was not all; some of his horses, and several of his cattle died. He rightly interpreted this, and trusting his temporal interests, and the concerns of his family, to the same beneficent providence, which had so well before provided for him and them, he returned to his appropriate calling, the ministry; from which he never again retired, until the infirmities of age compelled him."

In 1819, Mr. Collins was appointed presiding elder of the Scioto district,

and he was continued in that office during the year 1820. His efforts were eminently successful on this district. He found the harvest ripe, and he and those who co-operated with him, garnered a glorious crop.

The following has been communicated by a friend, in relation to this period:

“During the great revival of religion in Chillicothe, while Mr. Collins was presiding elder of the Scioto district, he devoted all the time that he was not necessarily employed in the other parts of the district, in forwarding the work in Chillicothe. The town was at this time in the circuit, and had circuit preaching but once in two weeks. But the magnitude of the work, and the great increase of the membership, required for it the constant labors of a pastor. The presiding elder, seeing the necessity of the case, erected Chillicothe

into a *separate pastoral charge*, and took the senior preacher (Rev. William Swayze) from the circuit, and placed him in charge of the new station thus created, and employed another to fill the vacant place on the circuit. Father Collins' arrangements for carrying on the revival, and his management of it while in town, were exceedingly judicious and successful, exhibiting his great skill and experience in this department of ministerial labor. He rendered every practical aid, both in the pulpit and in the pastoral work. His preaching, which has always been distinguished for being plain, practical and pointed, was, on these occasions more especially, delivered 'in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;' and, at times, were fine specimens of true pulpit eloquence.

"At one of his quarterly meetings about this time, (in March, 1819, we

believe,) his sermon on Sabbath morning was an unusually fine effort. He seemed to have received a fresh baptism of the Holy Ghost, and to be newly commissioned as an ambassador of the Most High. His text was: 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' His description of the office of an 'ambassador,' and of the nature of the embassy, in the text, was lucid and convincing, and fully prepared the audience for the enforcement of the exhortation: 'We *pray you* in Christ's stead, *be ye reconciled to God.*' In this part of his discourse he exceeded himself, and poured upon his congregation, in demonstration of the spirit and of power, such a stream of impressive and impassioned eloquence, as thrilled every heart, and awakened the consciences of

several stubborn sinners who had never before showed any signs of feeling. Some of these 'who came to scoff, remained to *pray*' when the congregation was dismissed, and, trembling under strong emotions, seemed transfixed to their seats, unable to leave.

"The meeting was protracted more than an hour after the benediction, in prayer with the penitents, and in exhorting the trembling sinners to be reconciled to God; very few of the congregation retiring until the close of the prayer meeting, and even then, with evident reluctance.

"Returning from the meeting, the writer was overtaken by a very intelligent Presbyterian gentleman of the town, who was present at this meeting, and heard the sermon. He seemed lost in deep thought; and, after walking some twenty or thirty paces along side, he

turned to the writer, and very earnestly asked him:

“‘*Who is that minister?*’ (meaning the one who preached.)

“‘That, sir, is the Rev. Mr. Collins.’

“‘Well, Mr. W——,’ continued he, after a pause of nearly half a minute, ‘that is the most eloquent, evangelical, and apostolic sermon I ever heard!’”

In 1821, and also the following year, Mr. Collins was stationed in Cincinnati. He was there among his spiritual children, who loved him, and many of whom are now with him in heaven. Through his instrumentality, many members were added to the Church during the two years. In 1823, he was stationed in Chillicothe, and in 1824, he was appointed to the Cincinnati district, and afterward to the Miami district. In this district, as changed, he continued to travel during the years 1825, 6, and 7.

He was then transferred to the Scioto district, where he labored from 1828 to 1831. In 1832 and 3, he was on the New Richmond circuit. He returned to the Cincinnati station in 1834, and, in 1835, traveled the White Oak circuit. This was the last circuit he ever traveled. On the Minutes of the Ohio annual conference of 1836, he was returned as superannuated, which relation was not changed until he left the Church militant for the Church triumphant.

From the time of this location, he lived about seven years to bless the Church with his labors, and to do good to all as his strength enabled him. The pressure of years and of infirmities was visibly upon him; but, with a Christian cheerfulness and resignation, he continued to preach; and although his health was feeble, yet the same overflowings of love were in his heart, and his words

reached the hearts of his hearers. His hair had become white, his countenance pale and somewhat sunken; but his eyes showed that the fire of his soul burned brightly. He visited his friends frequently at Cincinnati and other places, and was received everywhere with the veneration due to his years and his eminent services. His debility continued to increase with the advance of years, and a complication of diseases, until he was confined to his room and his bed. But there he continued to preach, in his conversations, to all who called to see him; and he was numerously visited by his friends. The approach of death, which he clearly perceived, gave him no alarm nor uneasiness. He patiently waited for the coming of his Lord. Rarely did he ever preach a sermon without referring to the promise that grace should be given to

the Christian in proportion to his day and trial. This promise was realized by him in his dying hour. His sky was clear; his soul was serene and joyful. His last words were, "Happy, happy, happy!" Such a death was expected from such a life. Thus departed, on the twenty-first day of August, 1845, this venerable man, in the seventy-sixth year of his age. On his death, the official members of the Church at Maysville, passed resolutions expressive of their grief at his loss, and of the highest appreciation of his labors as a Gospel minister; and also of condolence with his surviving companion, children, and friends.

There is no scene on earth so impressive and so instructive, as the death-bed of an aged Christian. There he lies; his race is run; his work is done. The shades of death are thickening around his

couch. They grow darker and darker. He has lived a long and active life. As a minister, his days and nights have been spent in calling sinners to repentance, and in encouraging believers. The promises of the Gospel have been upon his tongue. More than a thousand times has he brought before his auditory a death-bed scene. He has spoken of the Christian's triumph in that hour; and now that hour has come to him. O, how inexpressibly solemn is it! how momentous! His time ends, and his eternity begins. To him it is a glorious eternity. The assurance of this is the Christian's triumph; and the only triumph worthy of the struggle of a probationary life.

As a local and an itinerant minister, it is supposed the Methodist Church in the west has not had a more successful preacher than Mr. Collins. Without any disparagement to others, it may be

said, that, more than any one, he secured the affection of his hearers, and especially of those who were converted through his instrumentality. He was so unassuming and gentlemanly in his manners, so instructive and religious in his conversation, and so affectionate and pious, and evinced so much solicitude for the happiness, in this world and in the next, of all with whom he conversed, that the most obdurate hearts were overcome. Some may have resisted his efforts, but no one parted from him, after a short acquaintance, who did not love him and was not deeply impressed with his piety. And there were but few, after an interview with him, who were not more impressed with the loveliness and attractiveness of religion, than they ever had been.

Mr. Collins was not a classical scholar, but he was a deep thinker and an ex-

tensive reader. Very few equaled him in Biblical knowledge, and he had a general acquaintance with history and literature. His perceptions were remarkably acute, and his power of discrimination just and logical. His mind was so well balanced, that he had rarely, if ever, to regret what he had said or done. His nature was impulsive, but it was disciplined by grace and prudence. Though an acute logician, he did not care to treat his subjects in the most approved rules of scholastic discussions. He was a profound judge of human nature, and, in his addresses, he aimed more at the logic of the heart than of the head. His manner was entirely free from all affectation. His countenance showed a glow of affectionate benevolence and earnestness, if equaled, was never excelled; and the silvery, plaintive tones of his voice, at once capti-

vated the heart. He never preached without shedding many tears himself, and he almost always had a weeping congregation. His sermons did not consist so much of an inductive chain of reasoning, as the most striking illustrations of his subjects by facts drawn forth appropriately, and most impressively detailed. Many men of the most enlarged experience and observation have said, "We have heard greater preachers than Mr. Collins, but we never heard one we liked so well."

He was not a Paul nor a Cephas; but he was like the beloved apostle John. His theme was love—love to God and man. His acquaintances, in going to hear him, expected a feast; and they were seldom disappointed. The entertainment afforded so many delightful dishes, so tastily got up, and so admirably suited to the appetite and the occa-

sion, that those who attended, were, generally, instructed and delighted; and it may be said with as much truth in regard to him as to any other man, that no one ever heard him without forming resolutions to reform his life. His mind, not unfrequently, became full of the inspiration of his subject; and on such occasions, he rose to a height of impressive eloquence which was unsurpassed. These were never premeditated. They were of a character which defied all ingenuity and study. They were so spiritual in their conception, and so lofty in their description, as to seem to have no connection with material things. And the gush of tears which always accompanied these elevations, made them irresistible. No one, for the time being, could find it in his heart to resist such appeals. He yielded at the moment, not only willingly, but penitently.

How often is it said, that no one should be permitted to preach the Gospel, who has not had a collegiate education, and who has not passed through a regular course of study in divinity! Now, without depreciating learning in the least, it is not improper to say, that colleges are not the places to make men great or learned. A knowledge, and it may be a very important knowledge, which many receive at colleges, may do more harm than good. It may make an individual conceited and vain, when, in fact, he may be less informed than others of the same age who have never been at college, but who are deep readers and thinkers.

The man who aspires to eminence, must consider his work only begun when he leaves college. He has laid a foundation for a structure, which it will require his whole life to complete. But

if he rest upon his college course, in a few years he will forget almost all that is valuable which he has learned. To avoid this, he must constantly add to his stock of information. But the man who cannot claim these advantages, is often more studious in the acquisition of knowledge, from a consciousness of his deficiency. And this applies especially to the itinerant members of the Methodist Church. They are in the daily practice of preaching to a different congregation, which requires the exercise of their talents, and urges them to the attainment of knowledge. Facts will show how much many of these men, in vigorous eloquence and power, surpass those who have passed through college. Every man must make himself; the college cannot do this for him. Some who had very few advantages in early life, may be most emphatically said to

be great men. Indeed, every man who becomes eminent, must be, in a substantial sense, a self-made man.

Bishop M'Kendree was not a classical scholar; and yet there has not appeared in the Methodist connection a finer model as a preacher. He was eloquent, in the true sense of the term. Few men ever filled the pulpit with greater dignity and usefulness; and the beautiful simplicity of his sermons was, perhaps, unequaled in our country.

Classical learning is of great value, and should be acquired, if practicable, by every individual who aims at a professional life. But this learning does not qualify an individual for the high duties of the pulpit or the bar. There must be a deeper knowledge, which can only be attained by much reading and mature reflection. An individual who is brought in contact with men, and whose aim it

is to influence them, must become acquainted with the sympathies of human nature. And he must himself possess those sympathies in a high degree, or his efforts will be in vain. How often have we seen men in the pulpit, with great zeal, and in a vociferous manner, speak for hours without producing any other effect than weariness on their hearers! Such speakers, however zealous, are strangers to those gushing emotions of the heart which, with an electric effect, are imparted to the auditory. Without these, no man can be eloquent. He may be instructive; he may string his sentences together, and embody all the figures of rhetoric, but he can never reach and overcome the citadel of the heart. And unless he can do this, he can never become a successful instrument of reform.

Mr. Collins possessed these sympa-

thies in an eminent degree. And this, aided by the spirit of his Master, which he possessed, made him a most efficient minister of the Gospel. He was not fond of controversy, and seldom engaged in it. He overcame his opponents by love more than by controverting their views. But, occasionally, in the course of his sermons, he would touch doctrinal points with so much forbearance and charity, and yet with so much force, that he seldom failed to make a lasting impression upon his hearers. No one could turn aside from an argument, even against his own prepossessions and convictions, which, though pointed, was full of love and mingled with tears. The ground was thus prepared, while the seed was being sown. How few learn this great and Christian duty of a minister! No one was ever convinced of error, or reformed

by the use of uncharitable epithets, or by an attempt to make his principles and arguments appear ridiculous. There is a feeling in every man which is hostile to this course, and which will, effectually, resist it. It is unbecoming in any Christian minister, to have no higher aims than to confound his adversary. He should desire to convince him of his errors, and establish in his mind the principles of truth. This will save him from error, and, probably, from ruin. Here is a noble motive, which a Christian minister may well cherish.

In conversation, and in his general intercourse, there was a gentleness, a bearing so unassuming, so kind and meek, in Mr. Collins, and all he said was so interwoven with religion, that he preached more out of the pulpit than in it. There was a religious charm in his society, that delighted the most incon-

siderate, and caused them to love him. His friends lingered around him with an affection surpassing the love of man; and they who still live, can call up in their memories those delightful scenes as the happiest hours in their history. They are, indeed, "as the memory of past joys," "sorrowful to the soul;" but they are cherished as a priceless inheritance. What part of human life is so bright, so full of hope and of real happiness, as an assemblage of persons, united by the strongest religious sympathies, watching over each other for good, and seeking an inheritance that is incorruptible! Such an association is without alloy. It is the summit of earthly enjoyment.

Like other men, Mr. Collins had to struggle with the infirmities of our common nature. To a friend he said, that shortly after he commenced preaching

in Ohio, being then on the Cincinnati circuit, he preached one day in the town. Having for that day a large congregation, and feeling a desire to discharge his duty faithfully and to the general acceptance of the congregation, he became embarrassed, and utterly confused in his ideas; and being wholly unable to recover himself, the thought occurred to him, while preaching, that so soon as the service was ended he would leave the house, avoid his friends, and never return to the town. This suggestion he eventually resisted; but he was deeply mortified and dejected. The next day he preached in the country, on his circuit; and he felt uncommon liberty. This, before he was aware, elevated his feelings, and he saw there was a selfish principle at the bottom. On this view, he retired to a solitary place, fell upon his knees, and poured out his whole soul

before his God. He prayed fervently, that he might be kept from despondency on the one hand, and from an undue elevation on the other. Some two months after this, being at a love-feast in Cincinnati, a sister rose and told the congregation that she received her convictions, which led to her conversion, under the discourse of Mr. Collins which had given him so much pain. Hearing this, "he thanked God and took courage." And this led him to a resolution, which was never afterward shaken, that in preaching he would do the best he could, and leave the result to God.

The above reminds one of an occurrence in the life of Whitfield. During his visit to this country, he preached in many parts of it. On a certain occasion, he delivered a most eloquent discourse in the city of Charleston. On retiring from the pulpit, he met an ac-

quaintance and friend in the aisle of the church, who, shaking him cordially by the hand, said, "Brother Whitfield, you have preached a most eloquent discourse." The minister replied, in a solemn and subdued manner, "Ah! brother, the devil told me so before I left the pulpit."

A gifted preacher, who, by his eloquence, draws the attention and excites the plaudits of multitudes, is more strongly tempted on this ground than on any other. He often excites the envy of his associates; but the eulogies of the world are most dangerous. A more sickening and disgusting exhibition can nowhere be witnessed, than to see a minister of the Gospel, forgetful of his high duties and holy calling, prostituting the pulpit by preaching himself. Any attempt to play the orator, on such an occasion, sinks the minister

into contempt in the view of any individual of cultivated taste or piety. The minister should be forgetful of himself, and think only of his hearers and his subject. He stands between the living and the dead. His mission is of the last importance to man; and he should fill it with singleness of heart. If this be the spirit of the preacher, he cannot fail to be eloquent. The eloquence of the pulpit consists in the greatest simplicity of style and manner, in the dignity and sublimity of the topics discussed, in the awful interests involved, and in the overwhelming manifestations of a Redeemer's love. Let these fill the soul of a speaker, and he will be sufficiently eloquent.

There was a remarkable appropriateness and point in his religious conversations. Having preached at a private house in Springfield, Ohio, a Calvinistic

lady remained after the congregation had left, to converse with him. She commenced the conversation by saying, "Mr. Collins, I don't like your doctrines." With a mild and benevolent smile, he observed, "I am sorry to hear you say so, sister; but to what particular doctrine do you object?" She replied, "You do not preach the perseverance of the saints." "My dear sister," said he, "you are mistaken; I preach to the saints that they must persevere, or they cannot be saved."

One day he met a drunken man in the street, who came up to him, and professing much regard, observed, "Mr. Collins, you converted me some years ago." "I converted you! no doubt it was me; it looks like my work."

A young man who had taken some pains to become skeptical, and was inclined to consider the profession of Chris-

tianity as a weakness, accidentally heard Mr. Collins preach at a private house in Lebanon. The two rooms occupied by the congregation were small, and they were crowded. Several stood around the doors for want of better accommodations. This person remained on the outskirts of the congregation; but he could hear the preacher distinctly. The first word that fell upon his ear was eternity. That word had never struck him before as it then did. It was uttered with a voice so solemn and impressive, that its full import was felt. All things beside seemed to be as nothing in comparison with it. Time was spoken of as a mere fragment, of very short and uncertain duration. It was the antechamber of life, where preparation must be made for eternity. The two states were contrasted—the duties of the one, and the happiness or misery of the other—

with so much earnestness and affection, and with an unction so holy, that his heart was touched. He had never heard the subject treated with so much power. It was invested with consequences so tremendous and absorbing, that other considerations were banished from the mind. The fearful power which man exercises over his future destiny, was stated in such a manner as to create an awful sensation. This sermon he never forgot; and it led to an acquaintance with Mr. Collins.

A short time after this, the same person accompanied Mr. Collins, at his request, to a preaching-place in the country. It was at a private house, and the congregation was not large; but the people listened with interest to the discourse. His text was, James i, 25: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, he being not a

forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." He spoke of the perfect law of liberty, and what it was to look into it—of the necessity of perseverance, and the consequent blessings promised. This embraced the whole duty of man as required in the Gospel. And that duty was treated in so plain and practical a manner, and was so fully sustained by reason and Scripture, that it was made to appear in a new and an impressive light.

The sermon being closed, a notice was given that class meeting would be held; and all seriously-disposed persons were invited to remain. The companion of Mr. Collins had never been in a class meeting, and he was wholly unacquainted with its exercises. He remained, however, in the house, and was spoken to by Mr. Collins in his course of speaking to

the class. There was no little embarrassment on both sides; but the manner of Mr. Collins was so affectionate and gentle, that it made a strong impression. These exercises seemed to be so admirably calculated to increase the faith, and encourage the hope of professors of religion, that he was astonished he had not been acquainted with them before, and that they were not practiced by every religious denomination.

On their way home, Mr. Collins stated to his companion, that he had a request to make of him which was reasonable, and which, he hoped, would not be rejected. The request was, that he would read the New Testament, at least fifteen minutes every day, until his next visit. This promise was made and strictly performed. At first his watch was laid on the table, so as to be exact as to the time; but the interest in the Scriptures

increased so, that the time of reading was increased daily. In the progress of time and circumstances, a covenant was made between them, to meet each other at the throne of grace at the setting of the sun. This was continued for a long time. These circumstances are referred to, that the reader may understand the affectionate disposition and entire devotion to his duties by Mr. Collins as a Christian minister. And this may account for the great success of his ministry.

In the early settlement of the country, Mr. Collins was riding up the Ohio river, some thirty or forty miles above Cincinnati, in company with a friend, when they came to the forks of the road: the left hand road led to their place of destination, the right was more circuitous, and increased the distance; but Mr. Collins, against remonstrance,

preferred the latter, from an impression which he did not particularly define. It led to the mouth of Red Oak, where the town of Ripley is now situated. As they approached this point, they saw a funeral procession, which they immediately joined, and followed it to the grave. The corpse was the wife of a man who was an avowed infidel. After the grave was covered, Mr. Collins made known to the people that he was a preacher of the Gospel, and would then preach a sermon to all who should remain. No one left the ground. He read, for his text, a part of the twenty-fifth verse of the eleventh chapter of St. John: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;" and he preached with an irresistible power. The solemnity of the occasion, and the circumstances which brought him to the place, added,

no doubt, to the effect of the discourse. No one could apply circumstances more forcibly than Mr. Collins. There were many tears and sobs in the congregation. The infidel husband was overwhelmed; and from that day and hour he renounced infidelity, shortly after became a member of the Church, and lived to adorn the Christian religion.

Mr. Collins believed in a special providence, and he did not confer with flesh and blood, under a strong impulse of duty. And he yielded to the gentler emotions of the Spirit for good, even though he might not clearly see how the good was to be effected. The inclination to take the right hand road, was prompted, as he, no doubt, believed, by Providence, of which he could entertain no doubt when he saw the funeral procession, and preached to the mourning crowd. And is this too small a matter

for Deity? Peter was called to preach to Cornelius; and his objections were overcome in an extraordinary manner. Philip, being prompted by the Spirit, joined himself to the chariot of the eunuch, and “preached to him Jesus.” And who, that believes the Bible, does not believe that the same Spirit operates, more or less, upon Christians of the present day? The mode of its action may not seem to be miraculous; but it is spiritually discerned. It is a Divine agency—that spirit, or light, a portion of which is given to every man. It leads to good actions and happy results. And we are commanded not to “quench the Spirit.” Every religion, without this spirit, is cold and lifeless. John says: “Believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they are of God.” The revelator was “in the spirit on the Lord’s day.” The apostles, “after they

came to Mysia, assayed to go into Bythinia; but the Spirit suffered them not."

This doctrine is Scriptural; and it affords the sweetest consolation to the Christian. He can readily believe, if a "sparrow falls not to the ground without his notice," and the "very hairs of his head are numbered," that there is a special providence in his ways. And this encourages him to be firm under the most trying emergencies.

At another time, Mr. Collins being on a journey with a friend, they inquired of the keeper of a public house, at what place on their route they could find accommodation for the night. He said to them, "You can stay at a certain house; but by going ten miles further, you will be much better accommodated; and I would, myself, go to the farthest house." On the next Sabbath, he adverted to this circumstance in such a manner, as

deeply to affect the congregation. He spoke of the labor and difficulties which were willingly encountered for a comfortable night's lodging; and contrasted this with the journey of life and a blissful immortality—the transient and inconsiderable enjoyment of the one, and the eternity of the other. Truths always affect us when forcibly stated.

The Rev. John F. Wright, in a communication to the "Western Christian Advocate," dated in October, 1847, says: "Having been informed that the road leading to Ripley, passed within three-quarters of a mile of Bethel meeting-house, where all that was mortal of that venerable man of God, Rev. John Collins, was deposited, I determined to turn aside and look upon his grave. I found the sacred spot of earth distinctly marked by a neat little monument of marble in the form of a pyramid. On

its front may be seen, in raised letters, the following brief notice:

REV.
JOHN COLLINS.

Minister
of the
M. E. Church.

Died,
Aug. 22, 1845,
aged 75 years,
9 months, 22 days.

“While I lingered about the resting-place, and looked upon the tomb of my friend, many reminiscences of his life and times came up in my mind. For twenty-four years, I had an intimate acquaintance with much that this servant of Christ did, suffered, and enjoyed. In 1821, when I was transferred to the Ohio conference, brother Collins was among the strong men of that body. Throughout much of the western country, his praise was in all the Churches. He was then stationed in Cincinnati.”

And among other incidents, Mr. Wright relates the following:

“Brother Collins was reared in the doctrines and usages of the Society of Friends; and as was common among that people, he was much prejudiced against the Methodists. He was first licensed to preach in a local relation, but traveled extensively, and sowed the precious seed of the kingdom through much of West Jersey; and his labors were crowned with glorious success. During the revival of the work of God, many of the Friend Quakers became Methodists, while others were much opposed to them, and would not attend their meetings. The night previous to an appointment for preaching in the neighborhood, one of the Friends had a very remarkable dream, which made a deep impression on his mind. He supposed, in his dream, the day that God had appointed to judge

the world had arrived, and that our whole race was assembled before the judgment-seat of Christ. He thought the method of determining the case of each was to weigh them in scales. He saw many weighed, and receive their sentence, fixing their destiny for ever. He, of course, felt an indescribable solicitude in regard to his own case; and when it came to his turn to be judged, he was placed in the scales, and, to his great terror, he was found wanting; but before the sentence was passed upon him, the Judge said to the officers, 'Weigh that man again.' Before the order, however, could be complied with, in his fright he awoke. The next day, one of his intimate neighbors called at his house, and kindly invited him to accompany him to meeting, as he was one of the opponents of the Methodists. He positively refused, saying that he

had no business at that place, and did not wish to hear the Methodist preach. The ingenious neighbor then invited him to take a walk with him, expressing a desire to have some friendly conversation with him. To this he agreed; and the neighbor was careful to walk in the direction of the meeting, and kept his friend so much interested in talk, and absorbed in thought, that he was in sight, and very near the preaching-place before he was aware of it. He then suddenly stopped, and said he must return. The neighbor then renewed his pressing invitation, urging him to go in and hear what the preacher had to say, assuring him, it could do him no harm to hear the discourse; that he was now at the place, and could go into the house, sit with his hat on, and when the discourse was ended, he might leave as soon as he pleased. Finally, through

the skillful importunity of his friend, he consented to hear the Methodist once in his life, supposing, no doubt, that he would never be ensnared again.

Brother Collins was the preacher; and after singing and prayer, he announced as his text, 'Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.' The reading of this passage, of course, revived the dream in the Quaker's mind, and riveted his attention to the speaker. Before the discourse was ended, he found, according to the infallible balances of God's word, he was greatly wanting in that Christian experience which is contemplated and enjoined in the Bible, and is an indispensable prerequisite to all who would be prepared to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and enter into the joy of their Lord. He determined never to rest until his deficiency was made up in the abundance of that

grace of which he had just heard. He sought and soon found the great blessing of justification by faith, and realized peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. From the day he first heard brother Collins preach, he needed no persuasion to attend the Methodist meetings, but always delighted in the association. I recollect, when brother Collins related this narrative, his closing remark was, 'He made one of the best class-leaders in the Church I ever knew.'"

At the time of his conversion, Mr. Collins held the post of Major in the militia. On parade he had appeared in complete uniform, and was ambitious to excel in military tactics. But religion extinguished his military ardor; he resigned his commission, and sold to his successor in office his uniform. On delivering the uniform, Mr. Collins observed, in a most impressive and affec-

tionate manner, "My friend, when you put these on, think of the reason why I laid them off." This was "a nail fastened in a sure place." The words were deeply impressed upon the mind of his successor. He became penitent, found deliverance in the promises of the Gospel, resigned his office, and joined the Church.

Shortly after Mr. Collins removed his family to this country, he became deeply solicitous for the conversion of his father. The old gentleman remained in New Jersey, and was a very respectable member of the Quaker Society. This feeling became so strong, that he was led to the determination to visit New Jersey, for the sole purpose of personally soliciting this parent to seek religion. He set out on horseback with this view; and during the long journey, he scarcely passed over a mile of the road without

lifting his heart in prayer for his venerable father. He arrived at his former home in safety, and was kindly and affectionately received by his father and family. He talked much of religion, and prayed with the family. Some days after his return, his father observed to him, "John, we are all glad to see thee; but I don't like thy religion." This was unexpected, and it greatly depressed him. After some reflection, he resolved to spend the whole of the ensuing night in prayer for his father. Accordingly, at nightfall, after supper, he retired to the barn, that he might not be interrupted. Here he engaged in fervent prayer, until near ten o'clock. Some one knocked at the barn door; but he made no answer. In a short time, another messenger came, and opening the door, discovered him. This messenger was his sister, who had experienced re-

ligion, and who informed him that he had been sought for in his room, at his brother's near by, and at other places, and that he was supposed to be in the barn. And she told him that their father was suffering the greatest mental agony, and wished to see him.

With a joyful heart, Mr. Collins hurried to the room of his father, and, embracing him, wept and prayed with him. The struggle continued until near daylight, when deliverance came. His father was filled with peace, with joy, and triumph. This was a glorious answer to his prayers and tears. His joy was inexpressible, and full of glory. The father and son were united more closely than they ever had been. Having fulfilled his mission, and attained its great object, Mr. Collins separated from his friends, and returned to his home in Ohio.

Several years after this, while traveling his district as presiding elder, Mr. Collins dreamed that he received a large letter from the mail, sealed in black, and, on opening it, he was informed of the death of his father. This made so strong an impression on his mind, that he wrote a memorandum in his pocket-book of the dream, and the date, that none of the circumstances should escape him. Mr. Collins had an acute and a deliberative mind, free from fanaticism, and not at all likely to be misled by enthusiasm. And whilst he paid as little attention to dreams as most persons, the circumstances of this dream were so extraordinary, that he could not believe it to be an ordinary vagary of a sleeping mind, influenced by the subject of previous thoughts, or indisposition of the body. He believed it possible for God to impart a knowledge of passing

events to man, through the instrumentality of a dream; and that this was sometimes done for wise purposes. This opinion has been held by many persons of profound minds, and of great acquirement, founded, as they believed, upon irrefragable evidence.

Some two weeks after this dream, which remained vividly in his mind, Mr. Collins returned home, sent to the post-office, received a large letter from the office, sealed in black, answering the description of his dream; and on opening it, he found an account of the death of his father, in the same terms which had been shadowed forth in his dream. And the time of his death corresponded exactly with the dream.

On another occasion, Mr. Collins, being at West Union on Saturday night, with the view of preaching the next day, had a dream which disturbed him

much; and being depressed in the morning, he said to the lady of the house, "From my dream last night, I cannot but apprehend that some one of my family is either dead or dying." The lady suggested, that it was a device of the enemy to prevent good from being done at the Sabbath exercises. He replied, that that had not occurred to him. He preached that day with his usual power and success. And on his way home, the following day, he called at a house where he had been accustomed to stop. The family, as usual, received him with great kindness; but he observed something unusual in their countenances, which led him to inquire whether he had done any thing to offend them. They replied, "Certainly not." The Rev. John Sale happened to be at the house; and having stated that he had been at Mr. Collins' house the day before, Mr. Col-

lins inquired if his family were well. Being answered in the affirmative, Mr. Sale asked him to walk, observing, that he wished to have some conversation with him in relation to his family.

Mr. Sale inquired if he was willing that any of his sons should become Methodist preachers, and encounter all the hardships and reproaches incident to such a calling. He replied, certainly he was; and that he considered it the most important work in which a human being could engage. Mr. Sale inquired if he had a son that he thought would make a preacher. Mr. Collins named one of his younger sons, that both himself and his wife thought might become a minister. "And you would be willing," said Mr. Sale, "that this youth should preach the Gospel, that he might secure a place among the blessed in heaven?" "Yes," replied Mr. Collins, "and for the good

he might do in the world." "Well," said Mr. Sale, throwing his arms around him, "he is now in heaven. He died on Saturday night."

That visions of the night may, generally, be accounted for, on philosophical principles, must be admitted. An impression of the mind, which has long been forgotten, may be revived, by a solicitous feeling on the subject. Singular incidents have occurred under such circumstances. But there have been dreams, so minute in their facts, and so exactly corresponding with facts which transpired at the same time, and at a remote place, that no philosophy can satisfactorily explain them. They must, then, have been the result of accident, or of a supernatural agency. The facts, in the above cases, are unquestionable; and they are here stated, as they are deemed exceedingly interesting.

No man seemed to live nearer to the spiritual world than Mr. Collins. The atmosphere in which he moved, appeared to be purer than was common to man. His conversations had less of things earthly, and more of things heavenly, than was found in the intercourse of any other individual.

The following incident has been communicated by a friend:

“Mr. Collins, many years ago, when on a journey to the east, stopped a night with a Methodist friend, in a small town in Maryland. He was told the case of a woman, who lived in the village—a pious member of the Church—who had been, for some weeks, laboring under a very singular exercise of mind. She was in a state of most distressing mental agony, caused, as was gathered from her lamentations, by total spiritual darkness, and the deepest settled despair of God’s

mercy. She had frequent paroxysms of raving, in which she would utter heart-rending shrieks, and the most pitiable lamentations, and even profane and blasphemous expressions, accompanied with strong contortions of the body; during which she had often to be forcibly prevented from doing personal injury to herself, or those near her. At the time Mr. Collins visited the place, her body was emaciated, and her strength much exhausted. Her physicians did not understand her case, nor its cause; and their prescriptions gave no relief. Her friends and brethren seemed, also, at a loss to comprehend the nature of her affliction; and all their efforts to alleviate her distress, and comfort her mind, were unavailing.

With a heart that always melted at human woes, and sympathized with the suffering, Mr. Collins immediately visited

the afflicted woman, with the view, if possible, of aiding her in obtaining deliverance from her deep affliction of spirit. He endeavored to engage her attention, and interest her by words of comfort and encouragement. He tried to reason her into a more rational view of her own state, and inspire her with trust in God's mercy; but it availed not. After scrutinizing her case attentively, he strongly inclined to the opinion, that, if such a thing were possible in these latter days, here was a case of *demoniacal possession*! Whether this conclusion was well founded, or not, we do not pretend to say. He inquired for the pious, praying friends in the place; and having called a few of them together, he told them the result of his interview with the afflicted sister, and stated his opinion of her extraordinary case. He then requested them to accompany him

to her room, and unite with him in earnest prayer and supplication in her behalf; expressing his belief, that God would hear and answer their united, fervent prayer of faith, and deliver her from the power of the wicked one. To this they readily assented, and repaired with Mr. Collins to her room.

On entering the room, Mr. Collins made known to her the object of their visit; but she peremptorily forbade prayer to be made in her behalf, and manifested the greatest horror and aversion at the mention of it. Deterred not by her remonstrances, the little company, kneeling down, commenced prayer, Mr. Collins leading in the exercises. The woman fell into an agony of mind, shrieking and howling, with expressions of horror and blasphemy; while it required two or three persons to hold her in bed, to prevent her from offering per-

sonal violence to the praying circle. After two or three others had engaged in prayer, Mr. Collins again addressed the throne of grace, in strains of most earnest, fervent, importunate supplication, for the deliverance of the poor sufferer from the bondage of Satan, and her restoration to peacefulness of spirit and the comforts of religion. Before prayer was concluded, the paroxysm under which the woman was laboring suddenly ceased, and with it all vocal and other outward manifestation of mental and bodily suffering. She remained a few minutes in a calm, peaceful state, with her hands clasped, while she seemed absorbed in intense thought, or mental prayer. All at once, her countenance was lighted up with seraphic joy; she raised her hands, clapping them together, and broke out in shouts of praise to God, who, she declared, had broken the chains

by which she had so long been kept in bondage by the devil, and had turned her midnight darkness into glorious day. Her happy soul was freed from that hour, and she continued to rejoice in the Lord, and to stand fast in the liberty wherewith God had so strangely made her free; and Mr. Collins so found her as he passed that way, a few weeks after, on his return home."

From the great respectability of the person who made the above communication, there can be no doubt that the facts are substantially stated. In a physiological point of view, they will be interesting to the general reader, but much more so to the Christian who believes in a special providence, and in the efficacy of prayer. Mr. Collins, more than once, observed to the writer, that he had often been struck with the extraordinary effect of the fervent supplications of Mr. Wesley.

Seldom did he pray for a penitent individual, who was not converted immediately, or shortly afterward. There is no duty more clearly inculcated, in the Old and in the New Testament, than that of prayer for others. James says: "The prayer of faith shall save the sick;" and again, "Pray for one another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Mr. Collins believed that he served a prayer-answering God; and his faith was strong. The instances are numerous where the captive was made free, before the close of a fervent supplication in his behalf. And no one appeared to have a nearer access to a throne of mercy, or more power in prayer, than Mr. Collins. And yet he was no enthusiast. He believed the Scriptures, and claimed the promises with a fervent hope,

and an unyielding perseverance. This doctrine may be rejected by the formalist, or the mere theorist, in religion. But such a one, as Mr. Collins frequently remarked, "has only religion enough to make him miserable."

Who can estimate the good that may be done by a devoted minister of the Gospel? Whether at home or abroad, on a journey, or engaged in his pastoral labor, every day brings to him new duties and privileges. The dawn of every morning is new to himself, and to the world, and it constitutes a new chapter in the great drama of life. The sun rises to its zenith, and then declines, as it has done since the beginning of time. How numerous and important are the events of each day! Physical nature, true to its laws, moves onward in its infinite modes of operation; but moral agency affords a theme of contemplation,

of far higher and deeper importance than the laws of matter, whether applied to this globe, or to the endless systems of the universe. On this moral agency is founded our accountability, and the day of judgment. And each accountable individual, every day of his life, adds something to that record by which he shall be judged. Is this, indeed, true? It is, if the Scriptures be true. What importance is thus given to the events of each day! and how little do we reflect upon it!

But the pious minister of the Gospel, who has given up all for Christ, improves every hour in every day, in recommending the religion he professes. He does this in his appearance, in his words, and in his acts; and the impulse thus given, increases with time. In this way the works of many are seen and felt, long after their acts have been forgotten by

the living. But in the day of judgment, nothing shall be lost. All things will then be made manifest in the presence of the human race. What a glorious reward will await the faithful minister!

At a camp meeting in Ohio, Mr. Collins met with an interesting young man, who had been an unsuccessful seeker of religion for a considerable time; and he remarked, that he came to that camp meeting with a determination to devote himself to God, by the use of every means in his power; and if he should fail to obtain deliverance during the process of the meeting, he had resolved to abandon all hope of salvation. Mr. Collins, embracing him most affectionately, and after praying with him, advised him to walk a short distance, and to inquire of the first man he should meet, if he had religion; that, if he should answer in the affirmative, then

the young man should exhort him to persevere, and be zealous in the cause; but, if the answer should be in the negative, that the young man should encourage him as a seeker and pray with him.

The young man took this advice. The first person he met was a professor of religion; and he was exhorted to persevere, and, by an active and zealous discharge of every duty, to influence others to seek religion. Continuing his walk, he next met a serious and well-disposed person, but who had not been converted. The young man inquired of him if he was willing to have religion, and would engage to seek it earnestly and perseveringly. The stranger was touched, and answered encouragingly. He then inquired if he was willing to be prayed for. The stranger assented, and they both kneeled down, and the young man

prayed fervently for him; and before the conclusion of his prayer, he was himself most powerfully converted. He returned to the camp-ground rejoicing in God, under an overwhelming sense of his pardoning mercy.

No one, except Mr. Collins, would have recommended so novel an experiment. But he saw the deep sincerity of the young man, and understood his character. Any other mode could not, probably, have been successful. It was necessary that he should take a bold and a determined stand for religion, which would increase his faith, and revive his hopes. And the question may here be asked, whether any one, saint or sinner, ever prayed in sincerity for another, that was not himself blessed. The exercise softens the heart and elevates the feelings, and can seldom, if ever, fail to make the individual better.

The kindly sympathies of our nature were given to us for wise and noble purposes, and when properly indulged, under the enlightening influence of the Spirit, given to every man, they will lead to a religious life.

Mr. Collins, while preaching, one day, on the danger of procrastination, stated the following case: At one of his appointments, he was informed that four respectable men, being deeply impressed with a sense of duty, and with a sincere desire to seek religion, had determined to join society at his next appointment. He had a serious and most interesting conversation with them, and urged them not to postpone a union with the Church; that in doing so they incurred a fearful responsibility; that this resolution might be the turning point of their salvation; that life was uncertain; and that, should they live, there was no cer-

tainty as to the future—temptations might overcome them; and the strivings of the Spirit might be withdrawn from them. But they said that they had made up their minds on the subject, having counted the cost, and they had confidence in their own firmness of purpose.

Not one of the four came forward at the next appointment. Some years afterward, in traveling, he called at a public house; and he, walking into the stable to see that his horse was properly attended to, was followed by a drunken man, bloated and diseased by the use of ardent spirits, who, with tears and sobs, told Mr. Collins, that he was one of the four individuals who had, some years before, postponed a union with the Church; and, in the language of despair, he spoke bitter things against himself.

An account of a sermon, preached by

Mr. Collins many years ago, has been transmitted to the writer; and although it was published at the time, yet, as the description is graphic and interesting, it is inserted. The occasion was a quarterly meeting in Ohio. The writer says: "The meeting was opened by a young man, who, I was informed, had been recently initiated into the ministry. He was followed by an old man, dressed in linsey woolsey. He was tall and thin. His head was whitened by the frosts of years. His countenance was one that men love to look upon. There was nothing remarkable or peculiar in his features. His forehead was high and a little projecting; his eyes small and somewhat sunken; nose thin, and a little aquiline; and chin rather long. But he had an expression of countenance, that is not readily forgotten. His image is hung up in the chamber of my

memory, to be contemplated and admired. As he arose, every eye was riveted on him; and such was the silence of the large assembly, that the softest whisper might have been heard. My interest was excited in his first appearance; but when he spoke, I felt that I was in the presence of no ordinary man. His voice was rather weak, but its intonations were soft, sweet, and touching. It is what we readily conceive as perfection in utterance, though it may not be so easy to describe it. His gestures were few and unstudied. In fine, there was in his whole manner an indescribable charm, which I have not before witnessed.

“He read the parable of the prodigal son. On coming to these words, ‘And when he saw him afar off, he ran and fell upon his neck, and kissed him,’ he stopped. ‘This,’ said he, is my text.”

I had heard it preached on a hundred times; I thought I could preach a decent sermon on it myself. But even his manner of reading it, told me he had discovered something in this passage of Scripture, which was new to me. He proceeded to illustrate the love which our heavenly Father bears to his disobedient children, by the affection manifested by parents toward their offspring in all circumstances, even when disobedient and unnatural in their conduct, and the joy they experience when they return to their duty. I felt that I had never heard the subject handled in so interesting and feeling a manner; and my reflections involuntarily took a retrospect of my early life; and I taxed my memory for an unkind look, word, or action, toward the dear authors of my being. I felt an assurance that those around me were similarly employed.

There was a peculiar solemnity pervading the whole audience. Some eyes began to moisten; I felt my own do likewise.

“‘But,’ says the preacher, ‘I will tell you a story. In the year 1821, I was stationed on the Mad River circuit. You know, my friends,’ said he, ‘there are extensive prairies in that part of the state. In places there are no dwellings within miles of each other; and animals of prey are often seen there. One evening, late in autumn, a few of the neighbors were assembled around me, in one of those solitary dwellings, and we had got well engaged in the worship of God, when it was announced that the child of a widow was lost in the prairie. It was cold; the wind blew; and some rain was falling. The poor woman was in agony; and our meeting was broken up. All prepared to go in search of the lost child. The

company understood the business better than I did; for they had been bred in those extensive barrens; and occurrences like the present, are, probably, not unfrequent among them. They equipped themselves with lanterns and torches—for it was quite dark—and tin horns, to give signals to different parts of the company when they should become widely separated. For my part, I thought duty required that I should take charge of the miserable woman. She was nearly frantic; and as time permitted her to view her widowhood and childless condition, and the circumstances of the probable death of her child, her misery seemed to double upon her. She took my arm; the company divided off into parties; and, taking different directions, we commenced the search. The understanding was, that when the child should be found, a certain wind of the horn

should be made; and that all who should hear it, should repeat the signal. In this way, all the company would receive the information.

“The prospect of finding a lost child, in those extensive prairies, would, at any time, be sufficiently discouraging. The difficulty must be greatly increased by a dark, rainy night. We traveled many miles, and to a late hour. At length we became satisfied that further search would be unavailing; and all but the mother determined to return home. It was an idea she could not, for a moment, endure. She would hear of nothing but further search. Her strength, at last, began to fail her; and I prevailed on her to return to her abode. As she turned her face from further search, and gave up her child as lost, her misery was almost too great for endurance. “My child,” said she, “has been devoured

by wild beasts; his little limbs have been torn asunder, and his blood been drank by the hideous monster;" and the idea was agony. As she clung to my arm, it seemed as if her heart-strings would break. At times I had almost to support her in my arms, to prevent her falling to the earth.

"‘As we proceeded on our way back, I thought I heard, at a great distance, the sound of a horn. We stopped and listened; it was repeated. It was the concerted signal. The child was found. And what,’ said the preacher, ‘were the feelings of the mother? “My child was dead, and is alive again! he was lost, and is found!”’ It was too much; the whole assembly burst into an involuntary gush of tears. Some sobbed outright, and attempted in vain to conceal their emotions. ‘Such,’ said the preacher, ‘are the feelings of your heavenly

Father, when he sees his disobedient and wandering children returning unto him, when even afar off.'

"I have given an abstract of a sermon of forty minutes. My readers may form some idea of what the preacher said; but to feel such a sermon in all its power, it must be heard. I retired from the house with feelings that do not readily find utterance.

"I heard him preach the two succeeding days, and with a still more exalted idea of his oratorical powers. In fine, I have come to the conclusion, that the British spy only dreamed of a pulpit orator—that it was left for me to behold one."

From his letters, as well as his conversations, the theme of religion appears to have filled the mind and heart of Mr. Collins. A friend, who formerly resided in Chillicothe, has favored the writer

with some of his letters, from which the following extracts are made:

“At Home, March 21, 1819.

“Your kind letter came to hand in a few days after its date, and was read with emotions of gratitude and thankfulness. I received one, last evening, from ——, in which he mentioned the names of several who had experienced the blessings of sanctification, yourself being among the number. Happy news! Happy privilege! to rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in all things to give thanks. But yet there is room for a growth in grace.

“I thank you for the interest you take in the salvation of M. and D. I hope your best wishes may be realized, and all your labor of love rewarded in both worlds. I found, on my return home, the family and friends much engaged in the duties of religion; upward

of forty have joined our class in a few weeks. Indeed, I hear the same blessed news from every quarter of God's moral vineyard.

"I think the time long until I can worship with you in the Church, and under your friendly roof. I hope you are employing every opportunity in turning sinners from the error of their ways, as well as building up your class in the love of God. A class-leader is one of the most important stations in our Church. He has to deal with all the peculiarities of the members of his class. He must pay due respect to time, place, and character. His office calls on him to watch over every member, to instruct the ignorant, incite the negligent, confirm the weak, comfort the afflicted, and admonish the disorderly. And in doing these things, he must accommodate himself to every capacity. All the em-

blems which represent our office are full of eyes, to show us the need of prudence in every step of life, and in every part of the duties of our office. But, thanks be to God! his grace is sufficient for all the variety of human character. We should become familiar with every family where our members reside, wait around the death-beds of the afflicted, and wipe the falling tear from the faded cheek of the departing soul. Such kind attentions often win whole families. When you visit them, they meet you with a hearty welcome; and when you depart, they follow you with gratitude and thanksgiving. But, I need not speak to you of your duty; you know it and perform it better than myself. I feel less than the least of all saints. But, thanks to His precious name! I rejoice in his strength, and hope in his salvation. He has done much for my

family already; and I trust all my children will submit to his laws, and be subjects of his kingdom." This last expression of hope, though so long cherished, and with so much solicitude, was not fully realized during his life. But the surviving parent may still hope, that his many tears and prayers, in this respect, may yet be answered.

"At Home, September 4, 1820.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—By this you will learn that I am still increasing the long list of obligations to Him who rules the world. In the midst of many infirmities, I enjoy health and peace. My family are well, except two little daughters, who have been sick; but their health is improving. I should have moved my family this day, to my station, had it not been for the above affliction. I have a good prospect for the commencement of the work. Ten or twelve have been

converted, and some more have joined society. I found things in a low state; believers had become lukewarm. But, blessed be God! he owned his word as usual; the congregation trembled and wept almost every sermon; and when an invitation was given, mourners would crowd the altar, with streaming eyes and bitter groans. But believers prayed with so much indifference and unbelief, that I have sometimes doubted whether I ought to call mourners to the altar. I am happy to find, however, that professors are reviving."

"Cincinnati, March 2, 1821.

DEAR BROTHER,—I am indebted to you two or three good letters, and have nothing to pay; I pray thee, forgive me my neglect, as you know it is not for want of good-will or obligation.

"Through a kind Providence, we are, I trust, on our way to the good world.

Times are not so prosperous as I could wish. Seven persons joined society last night; and about ninety since I came to the station. None have been expelled, and one only has withdrawn. A number have removed, and some have died; but I hope we shall keep up the number of members in the Church. Our congregations are large and attentive; and, frequently, we have a crowd of mourners, and some converts. I would be glad if you would embrace every opportunity to talk to D. I often fear for him, and would be still more alarmed, were it not for the excellency of ——. Her piety and firmness will be a great help to him.

“Dr. M. has been very studious in his medical profession; and I expect that tomorrow he will receive the honors of a graduate. He has preached a number of times, but has not enjoyed himself;

owing, I presume, to his application to different studies. How many pierce themselves through with many sorrows, by seeking riches, honors, &c.! 'Strait is the gate, and narrow the way, that leads to life; and few there be that find it.'

"I am very thankful to hear that brother Q. is doing well. It must be painful to every good man, to see an old worn-out Methodist preacher, who has grown gray on the frontiers of the itinerant vineyard, neglected or in want. But that broad Eye that sees the falling sparrow, marks the end of that man, and it is peace."

"Cincinnati, May 1, 1822.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—I received your friendly letter by D. Collins, and rejoice to find you and yours enjoy good health, and are growing in grace. By this you will see that we still are surrounded with

the goodness of God, who delights to do all his creatures good. It is a time of general health in this city; and I wish I could say of a general revival of religion. But we have only common times. But few have joined society these last few weeks. I know of a number under awakenings, who are halting between two opinions. Our congregations are large and attentive; and although we have not witnessed so great an outpouring of the Spirit as we wished, yet there has been, and still is, a time of union, and a good increase. I have sent your letter, which contained the account of the triumphant death of brother English. I am sorry that I have not by me any of his letters, as they would be of great use to you, in writing a memoir of him for the press. With respect to your inquiry, if I 'would be willing to take a station in Chilli-

cothe?' I can only say, at present, that I desire to be wholly at the disposal of Providence. But I believe you can be much better suited from conference. Our Sabbath school is in a flourishing state. I find, by experience, that a station is much harder than a district; but, in a few days, all our toils will be over on earth. I look for it every day, and hope I may not be unprepared when death shall come."

"Piqua, July 27, 1824.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—After a long silence, I write a letter to my old friend, for the double purpose of obtaining a line from him, and of rejoicing his heart, by sending him good news from the walls of our spiritual Zion. My health, since I left Chillicothe, has not been good; but, at this time, it is much better than it was through the late winter.

"We have good times on all the cir-

cuits in the district, two only excepted. Our increase will, I think, amount to twelve hundred on seven circuits. At two camp meetings on this, and Mad River circuits, upward of one hundred joined society; and brother Lamden informed me, by letter, that in less than a week after the meeting, on one of the circuits, seventy-five more joined, as the fruit of our camp meeting. Yesterday, another camp meeting closed on this circuit. It being so near harvest, many were prevented from attending it; but the meeting was excellent. About fifty, it was thought, were converted; and about twenty of the most respectable citizens of the place joined society, many having left before the offer to receive members was made.

“I had the pleasure of seeing your uncle, Judge Widney, and family, your daughter and her cousin. I cannot de-

scribe my feelings when the two little girls pressed through the crowd to speak to me. They wept for joy, and listened attentively while I exhorted them to strive to meet a father and a mother in heaven. The children of our friends feel like relatives. May that God we love, deign to hear our prayers for our dear children! I hope, my dear brother, you will take some opportunity to speak plainly to D. on the subject of his afflictions, and help him on in the good way.

“I bless God, that I have never enjoyed myself better in religion, than on this district. It includes the ground I formerly traveled, and many precious souls whose names I first recorded with the people of God.

“I often think of the good times we have had together; and as often have I wished that I could blot from my life

that unprofitable period I spent in Chillicothe. I hope God, in his goodness, will never permit me to pass another such a year. And I am thankful that you have, this year, a man much better qualified to fill a city station; and God knows that I have often prayed, and still pray, that he may find favor in the sight of his charge, and be useful to them."

Mr. Collins was a strong advocate for popular, or camp meetings. And there can be no doubt, at an early day in the settlement of our country, that those meetings were eminently useful. The people would often attend them from a distance of ten to twenty miles. They would leave their houses, and the cares of the world, to worship, for several days, in some beautiful grove. There were but few, and often none, to interrupt such assemblages. And it was not un-

common, at that day, for many scores, if not hundreds, to be convicted and converted at one of those meetings. Among the most active, persevering, and successful ministers on such occasions, was Mr. Collins. The hearts of hundreds were broken, through the instrumentality of his tears and prayers, in the congregation, in the tents, and sometimes in a place of retirement. His labor of love was incessant under all circumstances.

In most parts of our country, the population having now become dense, and our churches numerous, it is doubted by many whether camp meetings are productive of much good, especially in the vicinity of our large cities and towns. Among the crowds which surround encampments of late, many evil-disposed persons are found, who are zealous to do mischief.

Mr. Collins preferred the early forms of Methodism, though he was free from all bigotry. And it will be found, that wherever there shall be a departure from the primitive modes of Methodism, there will be a decline in the spirituality of the Church and in its growth. The rules adopted by John Wesley were few and plain, but they constituted a religious community distinct from any that had before existed. Like the Friend Quakers, they were known by their dress, and general intercourse, as well as by the peculiarity of their forms of worship. In the language often used by Mr. Collins, "they dared to be singular." Like the Quakers, they were denounced as enthusiasts, and were not unfrequently pitied as a weak and deluded people. By some who were uncharitable, they were called hypocrites; and they were not unfrequently persecuted.

But their numbers multiplied in Great Britain and afterward in America, beyond all former example. And they are now among the most numerous sects of Christians in this country and in England.

But the Methodists have lost much of that simplicity of demeanor and dress, and of that zeal which at first distinguished them. A few months ago, the writer of this entered into a Methodist church on the Sabbath, but seeing the house fitted up with pews, and the males and females sitting together, and observing that they did not kneel in time of prayer, but occupied their seats, he supposed that he had mistaken the house. He looked round for the old way-marks, but could not see them in the fervid supplication, or the hearty responses of former times; and his inquiries were not satisfied until the preacher, before he

commenced his discourse, requested the "leaders" to meet him punctually the next evening.

Some individuals, proud of their acquired knowledge, and of their positions in society, may congratulate themselves on this advance of the Methodist Church. It is becoming more refined, and endeavors to accommodate itself to the improved taste and comforts of its members. And this, it is supposed, may increase the respectability of the Church. This may be the tendency of the charges spoken of; for "the world will love its own." The world hated the Author of our holy religion, and it can never love his disciples. The old paths have been proved to be good, and they should be inquired after. By steadily walking in them, the Methodist Church has flourished, and has been the instrument of incalculable benefit to the world. Let it

not, then, depart from them, but rather suffer, that good may be done.

Human nature is more influenced by apparently small matters than superficial observers suppose. Let any one take a retrospect of his life, and he will find incidents, considered of trivial importance at the time, have led to the most important results. We are generally led on to our destinies in this manner. And this is peculiarly the case in regard to religious influences. Whatever may act with effect upon the mind of one individual, may be likely to act upon the minds of many. A preacher in the pulpit, of grave and solemn aspect, whose countenance in every lineament shows deep thought and seriousness, and whose appearance and bearing become his holy calling, always makes a favorable impression. His hearers are prepared to believe that he brings

a message from Heaven. But if, in such a character, a levity appears in his countenance, his words, his demeanor, or his dress, he can be the instrument of good to no one. One of the most successful preachers of antiquity, in a great enterprise, addressed a people who were ignorant of his language. The sympathies of the heart are reached more effectually, often, by a commingling of feeling than by words. This is the language of nature; and it is seldom misinterpreted. A congregation reads it when a preacher rises to address them.

The appearance of Mr. Collins never failed to make the most favorable impression. His dress was always neat, and always plain and Quaker-like. Solemnity and benevolence were beautifully blended in his countenance, which was lighted up with intelligence, and an eye that evinced great sagacity. His voice

was shrill, but so full of the sweetest melody, that tears were often seen to start in the eyes of his hearers, and of his own, on his reading the first hymn. But that tremulous and soothing voice, so full of consolation, is silent in death—that heart, so full of Christian benevolence, has ceased to beat—and that countenance, which beamed with love and hope, is mingled with the clay of the valley. He has left us his bright example. His pathway was so marked, that no one can mistake it. And any one who knew him well, must have a strangely obdurate heart, who can think of his labors, and of his triumphant end, and not desire to live as he lived, and to die as he died.

THE END.



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